

Continuous publishing has changed my experience of developing ideas and I'm more attentive to my 'provisional outputs' than my handwritten notes: I can't imagine working in any other way

by Blog Admin

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Reporting back after some months engaging in continuous publishing, [Mark Carrigan](#) finds himself more productive and more attentive to his provisional outputs. Publishing not only his work, but his thoughts and methods, out in the open web has also served to introduce him to new experiences such as podcasting and crowdsourcing.



A few months ago [Pat Lockley](#) and I wrote [an article](#) for the LSE Impact Blog about **continuous publishing**. This was actually a phrase introduced by the site's editor for the title but it perfectly captured what we were trying to get at. Given that I have been semi-consciously trying to do this since then, I thought it would be a good time to try and get some thoughts down about exactly what I take it to mean and how it can work. This is what we wrote at the time:

Perhaps it's time to move from 'the Cathedral to the Bazaar'. These metaphors from the open-source software movement refer to contrasting models of software development. In academic terms we might see them as referring to distinct orientations towards publishing: one which works towards the intermittent, largely private, production of one-off works (papers and monographs → cathedrals) and the other which proceeds in an iterative and dialogical fashion, with a range of shorter-term outputs (blog posts, tweets, online articles, podcasts, [storified](#) conversations etc) standing in a dynamic and productive relationship with larger-scale traditional publishing projects: the 'cathedrals' can be something we build through dialogues, within communities of practice, structured around reciprocal engagement with publications on social media platforms.

I have been trying to do this for a range of things I've been working on since then: my PhD, my asexuality research, a twitter action research project I'm doing with [Salma Patel](#) and the (slightly fuzzy) idea for a monograph about digital academia I plan to start next year. In essence I've been trying to take a range of things I would be doing anyway and instead do them out in the open:

1. Brain storming sessions e.g. [11 random thoughts on asexuality studies](#)
2. Cataloguing and reviewing literature e.g. [meta-ethnography](#), [the myth of academic autonomy](#)
3. Developing my ideas in a way which sits between brain storming and formal writing e.g. [some thoughts on getting academics to use Twitter](#), a useful metaphor for [teaching academics about twitter](#), the cultural [significance of asexuality](#), a quick post on [attachment theory and my PhD](#)
4. Reflection on work I've been engaging with e.g. some thoughts on [socialization and personhood](#)
5. Developing presentations e.g. interrogating sex and gender categories: an [asexual case study](#), my TEDx [idea](#)
6. Posting homeless bits of academic work which have been cut from papers but I don't want to forget about e.g. the idea of 'emotional' [purchase](#),
7. Doing chunks of formal writing e.g. the [discursive gap](#)
8. Planning forthcoming writing projects e.g. [late capitalism and sexual culture](#)

There are also two other uses which fall outside the category of *stuff I would be doing anyway*. Since thinking about the idea of continuous publishing I've been more conscious of the motivation for some of the podcasts I do e.g. [this one](#) with Nick Crossley. If I'm engaging heavily with a book as part of my research

and it's logistically feasible to do a podcast, there's absolutely nothing to be lost by e-mailing the person to ask if I can do a podcast. Pretty much everyone I've ever approached has said yes, although it has sometimes taken a long time to schedule. The fact that I'm posting them on a fairly well developed website as well as my own probably helps but I suspect:

- Some people would have agreed anyway
- If more people start producing academic podcasts then they'll rapidly get accepted as a form of publication in their own right
- If this happens then it will create a natural opening for Multi-Author Blogs to start actively soliciting podcast contributions

If you're engaging with someone's book anyway it makes you the most natural interviewer in the world. Preparing for the interview doesn't really constitute any additional work because the questions stem from your own engagement, albeit filtered through some sense of the podcast as a listenable end product.

As well as podcasts, there is *crowd sourcing*, which I'm increasingly realising is an enormous benefit of engaging heavily with the academic twittersphere. For instance see the results of [this request](#) for help prior to a Twitter workshop I was doing. I was later able to incorporate this into the workshop, as well as the overarching project, in a number of deeply valuable ways. Compiling such crowd sourcing efforts by hand is very quick and I'm fairly certain there must be an automated way of doing it. The ensuing compilations then constitute a useful resource in their own right.

I increasingly can't imagine working in any other way. The fact that these *provisional* outputs are published makes me more attentive to them than if I was just scribbling them down on paper (my handwriting is basically illegible when I get overly-enthusiastic and I have files full of notes I can barely read from before I started working like this) or doing mind maps on my iPad (more useful but if I come back to them months later, my grasp on the conceptual structure of the map has diminished). The fact that people do read them is rather pleasant and changes the experiences of developing ideas in a subtle way which I can't quite get into words. My productivity has actually increased (a little bit in terms of formal outputs, very much in terms of continuing to develop projects) at a time when I'm massively over-committed and my attention is split between 20 things at once.

Furthermore, it's just *fun* to regularly throw stuff out there to see what people make of it.

Related posts:

1. [The advent of online dissemination techniques allow academics to focus just on developing great ideas, without needlessly trying to play the system.](#)
2. [Aiming to create impacts on societies in 14 countries, the collaborative MYPLACE project partners traditional journal publishing with a continuous online presence.](#)
3. [Continual publishing across journals, blogs and social media maximises impact by increasing the size of the 'academic footprint'.](#)
4. [Universities are increasingly moving towards recognising digital scholarship despite conflicting messages that favour traditional publishing in journals](#)
5. [Five minutes with Patrick Dunleavy and Chris Gilson: "Blogging is quite simply, one of the most important things that an academic should be doing right now".](#)